## Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

## Claims 1-9 cancelled.

- 10. (new) A Process for the preparation of an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose containing from about 20 to about 40 wt% of carboxymethylcellulose, having a Brookfield viscosity at 20°C and 20 rpm of from about 2000 to about 5000 mPa\*s, comprising:
- a. dispersing from about 20 to about 30 pbw (parts by weight) of carboxymethylcellulose having a degree of substitution of between about 0.5 and about 1.0 and whose aqueous solutions at 4 wt% have a Brookfield viscosity of from about 20 to about 1000 mPa\*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm in 100 pbw of a mixture of water and alcohol containing from about 30 to about 60 wt% of alcohol to form a dispersion;
- b. heating the dispersion at a temperature of from about 35 to about 55 °C and adding from about 0.5 to about 10 pbw of a cellulase preparation for each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion, and stirring the dispersion at this temperature for from about 60 to about 200 minutes;
- c. removing the alcohol from the mixture by distillation;
- d. deactivating the cellulase preparation by alkalinizing and heating the mixture at from about 60 to about 70°C for from about 20 to about 120 minutes; and
- e. cooling the mixture at from about 40 to about 55°C and adding from about 1 to about 5 pbw of a 30 to 35 wt% aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide per each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion and stirring the dispersion at from about 55 to about 70°C for from about 15 to about 45 minutes to form an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.
- 11. (new) The process of claim 1., further comprising adjusting the carboxymethylcellulose concentration of the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose by adding water to the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

- 12. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the alcohol is ethanol or isopropanol.
- 13. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a degree of substitution between about 0.6 and about 0.8.
- 14. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a Brookfield viscosity at 4 wt% of between about 20 and about 500 mPa\*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm.
- 15. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the cellulase preparation of step b. is a preparation comprising natural cellulase complexes having endoglucanase activity (ES-I, EG-II, EGIII), exoglucanase activity (CBH-I and CBH-II), and β-glucosidase activity.
- 16. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the cellulase preparation of step b. is selected from the group consisting of a cellulase preparation without CBH-I but enriched in EG-I and EG-II, a cellulase preparation having a single EG-III activity expressed by a cloned gene, and mixtures thereof.
- 17. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the mixture of water and alcohol contains from 40 to 50 wt% alcohol.
- 18. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the pH of step a. is adjusted to from about 5 to about 7 using an acid or base.
- 19. (new) The process of claim 18., wherein the acid is acetic acid and the base is NaOH.
- 20. (new) The process of claim 1., further comprising a step f. of adding a catalase to the solution and stirring the solution.
- 21. (new) The process of claim 20., further comprising adjusting the carboxymethylcellulose concentration of the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose by

adding water to the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

- 22. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the distillation is a vacuum distillation.
- 23 (new) The process of claim 21., wherein the distillation is a vacuum distillation.
- 24. (new) The process of claim 1., where in the cellulase in the cellulase preparation is derived from microorganisms selected from the group consisting of *Trichoderma*, *Streptomyces*, *Aspergillius*, *Humicola*, *Mycelophthora*, *Chrisosporium*, *Melanocarpus*, and mixtures thereof.
- 25. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose is stable.
- 26. (new) An aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose containing from about 20 to about 40 wt% of carboxymethylcellulose, having a Brookfield viscosity at 20°C and 20 rpm of from about 2000 to about 5000 mPa\*s, prepared by a method comprising:
- a. dispersing from about 20 to about 30 pbw (parts by weight) of carboxymethylcellulose having a degree of substitution of between about 0.5 and about 1.0 and whose aqueous solutions at 4 wt% have a Brookfield viscosity of from about 20 to about 1000 mPa\*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm in 100 pbw of a mixture of water and alcohol containing from about 30 to about 60 wt% of alcohol to form a dispersion;
- b. heating the dispersion at a temperature of from about 35 to about 55 °C and adding from about 0.5 to about 10 pbw of a cellulase preparation for each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion, and stirring the dispersion at this temperature for from about 60 to about 200 minutes;
- c. removing the alcohol from the mixture by distillation;
- d. deactivating the cellulase preparation by alkalinizing and heating the mixture at from about 60 to about 70°C for from about 20 to about 120 minutes; and
- e. cooling the mixture at from about 40 to about 55°C and adding from about 1 to about 5 pbw of a 30 to 35 wt% aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide per each 100 pbw of

carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion and stirring the dispersion at from about 55 to about 70°C for from about 15 to about 45 minutes to form an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

- 27. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose is stable.
- 28. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a degree of substitution between about 0.6 and about 0.8.
- 29. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a Brookfield viscosity at 4 wt% of between about 20 and about 500 mPa\*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm.